

## For the Love of Lasagna by urdearestmom

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**Summary:**

Dustin makes lasagna and teaches El about love.

## For the Love of Lasagna

### Author's Note:

Part 3 of the series. As always, reviews are appreciated. Hope you enjoy!

Prompt 3: "I'm like 75% sure this won't explode on us."

Dustin Henderson was a master chef. Or at least, he seemed to think he was. Others might say otherwise.

"Dustin, what are you doing?"

Dustin scoffed.

"I'm cooking, of course! What are you, blind, Lucas?"

"Doesn't look like cooking to me."

Mike's voice floated over from the front door where he had just come in with El.

"Guys, seriously? I just got here, I don't want to hear you arguing already!"

Dustin rolled his eyes at his friends as Lucas turned around with his hands on his hips.

"Just because you got back from a date with a pretty girl doesn't make you better than us, Mike!"

Will interjected from the living room, where he was playing on his old Atari.

"Lucas, even I can admit that makes no sense, and I've got a pretty stretchy imagination," he said.

Lucas levelled his laser-glare at the top of Will's bowl cut, the only

part of him that could be seen from where Lucas was standing.

"Did I ask you, Will?"

Will ignored him.

Dustin tried to shut down a snort, but it was too late and Lucas had already heard it.

"What are *you* laughing at, numbnuts?"

Dustin continued layering the ingredients for the absolutely exquisite lasagna he was making.

Lucas decided now was the time to remove himself from the room and proceeded to go down the hall in the direction of the bathroom, muttering about "idiots" who only ever side with him "when it benefits them" even though "I'm always right".

Mike shook his head and went to join Will on the Atari. El walked up to Dustin and observed his actions.

"Is that lasagna, Dustin?"

Dustin beamed.

"Why yes, my most beautiful El, you got it!"

"Quit hitting on my girlfriend, will ya?" shouted Mike.

"Oh, shut up, Wheeler! You can't have her to yourself all the time you know!" Dustin replied.

He turned to El.

"He just doesn't know when to leave you alone, does he?"

El shook her head.

"Mike is... silly, sometimes. But he is nice. He is my favourite."

Suddenly she looked at the doorway to the living room with a panicked expression.

"Don't tell him I said that."

Dustin grinned.

"Why not?"

El blanched.

"He's not supposed to know."

Dustin let out a chuckle.

"I'm pretty sure he knows, El. If he doesn't then he's being more dense than usual."

Her eyes widened.

"He knows?"

Dustin stopped his lasagna-making to stare at her.

"Seriously, El? You're his girlfriend, obviously you gotta like him more than you like the rest of us! Even from the beginning we all knew he was your favourite."

She shook her head.

"No. He is my favourite of the boys, he knows that. I mean... he is my favourite person in the whole world. I like him more than anybody else. I forgot what the word is, but you know what I mean, yes?"

Dustin resumed his lasagna-making. He was almost done.

"You mean... you love him?"

El smiled.

"Yes! That is the word."

"But you know there's a difference between loving someone and being in love with someone, right?"

El tilted her head, looking confused.

"No?"

Dustin sighed, realizing that now that he'd said it he would have to explain it to her.

"Hold on, let me just put this in the oven and I'll explain it to you."

He opened the oven door and noticed the tray of lasagna already floating towards the opening. Once it was in and the door was closed, Dustin observed his masterpiece through the window.

It was beautiful.

He looked at El. She was eyeing the oven with an air of wariness.

"Hey, don't give my lasagna that look! I'm like 75 percent sure this won't explode on us!" he said.

"Yeah, and what about the other 25 percent?" came Lucas' scathing voice from the doorway.

Dustin glared at him. El giggled.

"Don't worry Dustin, Joyce explodes things in here all the time."

"Well in that case..."

Dustin started edging towards the living room where Lucas had just disappeared to. El noticed immediately and used her powers to pull him back against his will.

"Dustin, you said you would explain."

"Right. Well. If you don't want Mike to know then maybe we shouldn't talk about it where he might hear."

She stared at his face bemusedly as he struggled to come up with a way to avoid the possibility of Mike overhearing their conversation.

Suddenly, he remembered that he had used all of Mrs. Byers' cheese to make the lasagna, so he should probably go buy more to restock her fridge.

"Guys, me and El are going to the store to buy more cheese 'cause I used all of it! We'll be back soon!"

El followed him out the door. As soon as they hit the end of the lawn, she questioned him again.

"Dustin?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you going to tell me or not?"

He cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Okay, well uh, this is awkward for me to talk about because usually guys don't talk about feelings but I'll try my best to explain it to you, alright?"

El nodded.

"So when you love someone, you would do anything for them. If they were in danger, you would risk your life to save theirs. When they're hurt, you feel an intense desire to help them and get back at whoever hurt them. You have fun with them. You trust them. Sometimes you fight, but if you really love the person you will forgive each other and go back to the way it was."

El understood this part. That was how she felt about Mike, but it was also how she felt about Dustin and the other boys. Except with Mike it was different. He was special to her, and perhaps that would make more sense once Dustin explained what "being in love" meant.

"There are different types of love that you can feel. The kind of love that I described just now, that's the kind of love us boys have for each other. That's the kind of love Mike has for Nancy and Holly, or his mom and dad. It's the kind of love you have for us, and for Mrs. Byers and Jonathan. You get what I'm saying?"

El nodded again.

"Being in love with someone is different. Being in love means all those other things I talked about, but it also means that that person is

your favourite person in the whole entire world. If all your friends were in danger, you would save that one first. You want to kiss that person, and hold their hand, and go on dates like you and Mike do. You tell them everything, you can talk about anything and that person won't judge you. Being in love means you want to spend the rest of your life with that person, and have them with you all the time to go through all of the obstacles of life together. It's an overwhelming feeling sometimes. But it's amazing when you do find that special person, and I think you've found him, El."

El seemed surprised that she understood the explanation the first time.

"I get it now. I think... I think I am in love with Mike. But I don't know... should I tell him?"

She asked this right as they arrived at the store.

Dustin looked at her as they entered, trying to gauge whether or not she was seriously debating telling Mike she was in love with him.

"El, are you serious? Of course you should tell him, that's major!"

El frowned.

"But... what if he is not in love with me?"

Dustin could not believe this girl. As they reached the dairy aisle, he shook his head, trying to rid himself of the utter ridiculousness that was Mike and El's relationship.

"Are you kidding me right now? Of course he is! The kid's practically been in love with you since the day we found you!"

"Oh."

"Yeah, El!"

"I should tell him, then."

Great, now Dustin couldn't remember which cheese it was that he had used for the lasagna.

"Yes, you absolutely should."

He decided to just grab a random one and apologize to Mrs. Byers later.

"I think I will tell him soon. But not today. I have to think first. Thank you for explaining, Dustin."

Dustin smiled sheepishly.

"Ah, it was nothing. I just needed to help you two get on that road, man."

El laughed.

"Okay, Dustin."